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## White House Fails To Calm Concerns On Secret Deals

By Walter Pincus  
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Reagan and senior White House aides continued yesterday to try to calm criticism of the administration's secret arms deliveries to Iran, but their efforts were met with renewed attacks from Capitol Hill and an opinion poll showing overwhelming public disapproval.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz took the unusual step of authorizing his spokesman to distance the secretary from the White House's Iran policy. Shultz's spokesman, Charles E. Redman, said the secretary "was not directly involved, although he was sporadically informed of some details" of the secret effort to deliver arms to Tehran to try to win friends there and get help in efforts to release U.S. hostages held by pro-Iranian Moslem fundamentalists in Lebanon.

An ABC News poll of 510 adults taken after the president's televised speech on Iran Thursday night found that 72 percent of those polled disapproved of "shipping arms to Iran as a way of improving relations with moderate elements in that country," a rationale Reagan gave in the speech for his actions.

An even larger majority, 79 percent, disapproved of delivering arms to Iran to help win release of U.S. hostages. Fifty-six percent of those interviewed said they thought that there was a deal to swap hostages for arms with the Iranians.

Reagan, in remarks to a group of philanthropists yesterday, said, "Now that the veil of secrecy has been lifted, the unfounded rumors laid to rest, I think most Americans will approve of our efforts to better relations between our two countries and rejoice that it has resulted in the freeing of some of our fellow citizens who had been hostages."

Two of Reagan's top aides, national security adviser Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter and White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan, spent much of yesterday publicly trying to put the Iranian af-

fair in a positive light, but on some points the two disagreed.

In an interview with reporters and editors of The Washington Post, Poindexter said that "those that are familiar with the details of the operation are still optimistic" that it will prove successful. He added that the unexpected revelation of U.S. arms deliveries to Iran might now "expedite" the process of improving U.S.-Iranian relations and win release of more hostages.

Regan, in a breakfast meeting with reporters, was more pessimistic, saying that, because of the disclosures, "I don't think . . . we'll be able to pursue this avenue for any reason for quite some time to come. And if it's restarted, it'll come from an entirely different area."

Both aides identified the hostages and the president's desire to win their release as the basis for the White House decision to look for new openings to Iran.

On Capitol Hill, reaction to Reagan's television speech was largely—but not exclusively—negative. Sen. Pete Wilson (R-Calif.) said, "Personally, I think they should have chosen some other means, like medical supplies," to send to Iran in the effort to improve relations.

Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) said, "The more we learn, the clearer it becomes that the administration has been duped by our enemies and duplicitous with our allies—and with the American people."

Sen. J. James Exon (D-Neb.), a moderate member of the Armed Services Committee, said Reagan's actions "are certainly morally wrong . . . . He has damaged his credibility everywhere. And if the American people buy this one, God help us."

Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.), outgoing chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, defended the decision to send arms to Iran as a good-faith gesture to Iranian moderates. But Lugar predicted that "there will be considerable debate over the judgment of the president," as well as controversy over the decision to hide the operation from Congress.

Regan indicated yesterday how powerfully the president was influenced by his concern for the fate of the hostages. The chief of staff said:

"I ask you, what's a human life worth? . . . We're being scorned for this. If you were taken, or one of

your relatives taken, what would you have us do, sit as the head of government in the United States and say, 'Look, we won't even talk to you about those hostages'? The president is a man of compassion . . . . You have all the families saying 'Please, you've got to do something.' We're branded as being calloused, [as if] we don't give a darn about these hostages . . . . But when you try to do something to get the hostages out, immediately, ah—you're swapping human flesh; you're indulging in some nefarious practice. I ask you, think it through. What would you have us do if you were in our position?"

Regan and Poindexter, in their separate interviews, disagreed on who had first proposed providing arms to Iran as a sign of good faith. Poindexter said this was not an Iranian idea, implying that it may have come from a third country he refused to identify. Previously, other sources have said Israel suggested the idea.

But Regan said, "They [the Iranians] came up with the idea that to show this good faith, they wanted particular spare parts and particular types of defensive weapons, anti-tank type of things. This posed a dilemma to us—should we or should we not do this? . . . Our reasoning was that a small amount of weapons to show good faith couldn't affect the outcome of the war . . . but would indicate that the people with whom the Iranians were dealing did have access to the president."

Both men insisted that the United States maintains an arms embargo against Iran despite the government's shipment of limited quantities of "defensive" weapons to Tehran. "The embargo still holds today," Poindexter said.

At the same time, both said that the president has the right to waive a policy such as the embargo for a specific purpose. "Those who set the policy, if necessary for statecraft, can bend or change that policy," Regan said. "In this case the president decided to bend his policy in a minimal amount . . . ."

Poindexter said the United States will continue to press other nations to stop shipping arms to Iran.

Regan was asked how the United

States can now prosecute people for shipping arms to Iran in violation of the embargo. He replied, "The president has certain powers that are given to him to do things in foreign policy that are not given to ordinary citizens—and he's not above the law. But I'm saying that he has powers that are more than normal powers."

Poindexter said the shipment of some U.S. arms was intended as a sign of good faith. Asked if the Iranians had responded in kind, he said they had "helped get out our hostages." But when asked if that amounted to a swap of arms for hostages, he firmly rejected that idea.

The two White House aides refused to discuss Israel's role in the arms deal or to give details of the arms shipments.

They also refused to confirm reports that Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger opposed the plan. Asked if the White House had considered the possibility that information about the covert program might leak, Regan said, "We went into that. And that's why many . . . were saying that the down side, you know, would be, might be, damaging, would be hard to explain, and accordingly, advised against doing this."

The findings in the ABC News poll represented one of the rare times in the Reagan presidency when large majorities of the public rejected the arguments made by the president in a televised address to the nation. The poll found that by 56 to 38 percent, the public disapproves of "the way Reagan is handling relations with Iran." By 59 to 38 percent, those surveyed said Reagan had been wrong "to keep the deal secret from congressional leaders." By 56 to 35 percent, respondents said Reagan had abandoned his past policy and "has been negotiating with terrorists by supplying Iran with arms."

Asked by reporters whether the president had a preoccupation with the fate of the American hostages in Lebanon, Regan replied, "Yes, and that's a damn good thing that we have a president like that, that has that in mind. You can rest more assured tonight that if you were ever taken hostage, your government's behind you."

Regan said the president had asked him "every single morning" about efforts to free the hostages.

Six Americans are currently listed as being held hostage in Lebanon, though the kidnapers say they have killed one.